

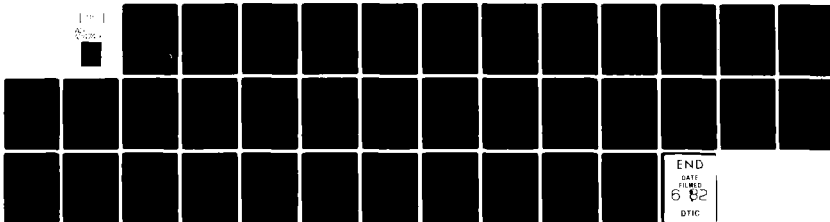
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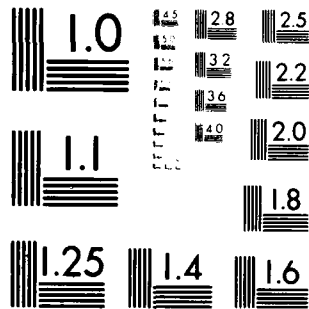
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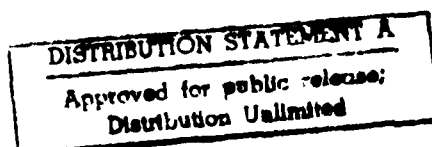
IRAN AND THE PERSIAN GULF

Papers prepared for a
conference sponsored by
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April 2, 1982

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CONFERENCE ON IRAN AND THE PERSIAN GULF

April 2, 1982

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THE CONTAGION AND PERSISTENCE OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION

James A. Bill

Paper Prepared for Department of State Conference on Iran and the Persian Gulf, Washington, D. C., April 2, 1982.

As the Iranian revolution moves well into the fourth year of its existence, myths and misperceptions concerning its substance and appeal continue to dominate western analysis. Presumed vested interest along with a large dose of wishful thinking have combined to pitch the level of understanding at a point where discussion focuses on serious assertions about the imminent fall of the religious leadership, the final collapse of the Iranian economy, the rebellion of military forces, the great power of various exile groups, the death of Khomeini himself, and even the demise of Iran as a nation-state. Combined with this calibre of prognostication are daily predictions about tribal separatism, communist ascendancy, and even of a possible Pahlavi restoration. Analysis of the role of the Iranian revolution in the regional context has also tended to suffer from a certain amount of this "mythful thinking." The twin arguments most often stressed in this context are : (1) that the Iranian experience is a unique one and therefore can have little relevance to other countries; and (2) that the chaos and violence in post-Pahlavi Iran have so tarnished the model that it can hold little appeal elsewhere in the region. Although many arguments can be made in support of these points, it is time that certain facts and realities be recognized and explored.

First, in February Iran commemorated the third anniversary of its revolution. The revolution is now in its fourth year. Second, extremist religious leaders continue to direct the country. Third, the system survives despite the following challenges and obstacles: (a) a full-scale war against an invading neighbor on the western front; (b) approximately one and a half to

two million refugees within its borders to the west and to the east; (c) a struggling economy increasingly in lack of resources and financial reserves; (d) a political leadership that has suffered an unprecedented loss in lives through assassinations and bombings; (e) a general famine of political leaders and institutions due to the policies of the previous regime; (f) the flight and opposition (passive or active) of nearly 400,000 members of the educated professional middle class who provided the backbone of the technocracy; (g) the constant threat of well-organized and dedicated opposition guerrilla forces committed to the destruction of the regime; and (h) the pressure of international ostracization especially evident in the region and in the west.

Given these facts, it is essential to attempt to answer the question of why and how. Surely, the rule of religious extremists has thus far prevailed for some very good reasons, reasons that may possibly indicate deep strengths and great staying power of the present style of rule. A recognition of these reasons may also provide a more accurate assessment of the political future of the country. To those countries both in the Middle East and in the West whose interests are intertwined in some way with Iran, it is necessary to begin a more objective kind of exercise in analysis. The assumption in this paper is that the Iranian revolution is not a temporary aberration, that it is not directed by the senile and the stupid, that it is not lacking in support among the peoples of the country, and that it is not necessarily destined for failure. The political persistence of the Iranian revolution resides in many factors. Among them are the following six.

First, Ayatollah Khomeini, the charismatic symbol and leader of the revolution, has proven himself to be an extremely shrewd and intelligent political tactician. Placing himself somewhat above the everyday political infighting, he has cleverly balanced the various extremist and radical groups off against one another. In the process, he has lived a simple lifestyle and

has built a military support group of extraordinary dedication and commitment to the revolution.¹ Second, while devouring significant groups of its own initial supporters (i.e., the middle classes), the revolution still maintains a solid and broad base of popular support. The religious leadership recognizes the mostaza'fin (the downtrodden, dispossessed) as its major constituency and attempts to provide the lower classes with food, shelter, and clothing. In continuing to take from the rich in order to give to the poor, the religious elite works to ensure the support of this mass base. It is from here also that the regime recruits the young men who fight and die on the western front. On February 9, Khomeini gave an extremely important speech in which he stressed repeatedly the class nature of the revolution. In his words: "To which class of society do these heroic fighters of the battlefields belong? Do you find even one person among all of them who is related to persons who have large capital or had some power in the past? If you find one, we will give you a prize. But you won't." In speaking to the constituency of the revolution, Khomeini said that it was Imam Ali himself who said that his torn shoes were more valuable to him than any position in government. As long as the present regime is able to meet the basic demands of this large base of popular support, it has good reason to expect to continue to lead the society.

The third reason for the persistence of the revolution concerns the ideology of Shi'ism. The revolutionary leadership continually justifies its policies in terms of Islam. In so doing, it is again speaking to its constituency, the masses of believers. This ideology is extremely potent and carries within itself the flavor of martyrdom, the ultimate sacrifice. There have been many

¹For a more detailed discussion of Khomeini as a political tactician and strategist, see J. A. Bill, "Power and Religion in Revolutionary Iran," The Middle East Journal, 36 (Winter, 1982), 41-45.

martyrs to the revolution since January 1978 and many Iranians continue to put their lives on the line for their religion, their country, and their revolution. This has been particularly and dramatically the case during the fighting against the Iraqis over the past six months. The fourth and extremely important reason for the continuation of the religious revolutionary regime concerns military support. By decapitating the Shah's military organization and by forming at the same time a parallel armed force (the pasdaran), the regime has developed its own warriors. After three years of fighting internal guerrilla organizations and 18 months of battle against an outside invader, this military force has become battle-hardened and experienced. It has at the same time developed a deep commitment to the cause for which it has fought so hard.

The extremist political elite in revolutionary Iran now has some hard-earned political experience. It has gathered momentum as a ruling entity. Mullahs have travelled internationally where they have engaged in diplomatic, economic, and political missions. They have learned to make use of talented, but inexperienced members of the lower middle class who supply the badly-needed technical and professional skills. Lastly, this regime remains besieged. The Iranian revolution, like many other revolutions before it, finds itself attacked and threatened by numerous outside forces. This in itself has required the country to pull in ranks and to overlook many of its internal differences. Those outside powers who threaten the revolution or who attempt to smother it are in fact only contributing to its longevity and strength. At the same time, these external forces help guarantee the continuation of this phase of religious extremism.² This force of political momentum and the attack from outside enemies are the two final reasons for

²If there is any truth in Leslie Gelb's March 7, 1982 New York Times

both the persistence of the Iranian revolution and the control of that revolution by religious extremists.

Given these considerations, it is not at all improbable that the current style of political rule in Iran will survive the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. As long as the regime has mass support, the loyalty of the military, and the ideological underpinnings of Shi'i Islam, it may remain in place for many years to come. Although scenarios that include a military junta or coalition government of moderate religious leaders, middle class professionals, military officers are certainly also credible, it now seems probable that a continuation of rule by religious extremists is the most likely form of government in Iran over the next several years.

A recent trip to three moderate-traditional Arab countries has convinced me of the extreme contagion of the Iranian revolution. This infection is spreading and seeping throughout the entire region and its influence can be seen in countries such as Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Muslim fundamentalists and the mostaza'fin throughout the Arab world find something appealing about the Iranian revolution. According to one Muslim Brother in Egypt, the revolution in Iran was "a victory for Islam." To those who are dissatisfied and disgruntled with the corruption, oppression, and the cruder aspects of westernization that they see in their own societies, the Iranian revolution promises a way out. It is not that the present style of political rule in Iran is admired or even tolerable, rather it is the fact that the experience in Iran represents a recipe for revolution. The fact that it may be failing as a model for political rule is quite separate from this.

article alleging certain activities carried out by the United States against the Iranian revolution, then such misguided policies only promise to produce continued and strident anti-Americanism in Iran, an opening for the development of Soviet influence in the revolution, and a guarantee that only the most extreme elements will prevail in the country.

At the same time, the longer the Islamic Republican Party maintains power in Iran, the longer Iran is able to hold out against Iraq in the war, and the longer Iran is able to prove its independence from both Great Powers, the more serious becomes the threat to the other traditional regimes in the region. The fact that several of the oil-rich traditional countries have sent an estimated \$20 in aid to Iraq in its war effort against Iran and that despite this Iran has recently been getting somewhat the better of the fighting has been most disconcerting to the nations who support Iraq. In the words of one leading scholar of Iraq: "The Iraqis thought that they would be fighting a war against Iran. Instead, they found themselves fighting a revolution." It is a lesson of history that revolutions are strengthened not weakened by the application of outside force.

The flames of the Iranian revolution will not be extinguished. They may burn in different directions depending upon how the internal winds blow. The heat of these flames shall be felt throughout the Middle East and especially in the Gulf. Unless the leaders of these neighboring traditional countries begin to take the strength of the Iranian revolution seriously and begin to devise different and more sensitive strategies to deal with this heat, they may find themselves caught up in a conflagration that shall sweep through the area, destroying themselves along with their ongoing social and political systems.

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STABILITY AND INSTABILITY ON
THE ARAB SIDE OF THE GULF

One recurring question running through the lengthy debate over the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia last fall centered on the stability of Saudi Arabia, and by implication that of the five smaller monarchies of the Gulf. Are these countries essentially houses of cards, likely to collapse at the merest whiff of wind? And, if so, is not the continuation and strengthening of an American political, military and security commitment to these states simply compounding the "mistake" made in Iran? Any assessment of the stability--or instability--of these states necessarily involves a complex calculation of the impacts of a wide range of relevant factors, most of which produce both positive and negative effects. Broadly, these factors fall into two categories with the first being the underlying social, economic and political environment. Secondly, the rapid pace and far-reaching impact of oil wealth constitutes an overlay on this environment and introduces new factors even as it distorts existing, environmental ones.

On the surface, the six monarchies of the Gulf provide a reassuring impression of homogeneity. This can be observed in ethno-religious terms (as these countries are basically Arab and Sunni Muslim), as well as in terms of classes (traditionally, there has been a minimum of social stratification). But looking deeper, it is clear that there is indeed significant social fragmentation. For one thing, all of these states possess large and important minorities (such as Persians, Indians, Shi'is

Summary of remarks prepared for Conference on Iran and the Persian Gulf, Department of State, Washington, D.C., 2 April 1982.

and, more recently, large and varied expatriate communities) whose place or role in a dominant Sunni Arab community has yet to be satisfactorily resolved. To some extent, the December 1981 abortive coup d'état in Bahrain may reflect Bahraini Shi'i dissatisfaction with lower socio-economic standing. On another level, these six states form only one part of a larger Gulf unit, where tension exists in the form of two major dichotomies: Arabs versus Persians and Sunnis versus Shi'is. The rivalries caused by these schisms play no small part in the current Iraq-Iran war.

Another essential element of the environment is that of the dominance of traditionalism. On the surface, the political map of this region is divided into six "nation-states". Political authority, however, is fragmented much more narrowly and inflexibly: the continuing strength and vitality of tribes, the heritage of traditional economic and cultural patterns, age-old structures of social organization and identities, as well as the forces of continuing social and religious conservatism. The last is often obscured behind the patina of change but remains a strong, omnipresent force in the Gulf, as in other countries where the pace of change has not been nearly so rapid or apparently all-encompassing.

On this canvas have been painted the effects of rapid oil-induced change. The resultant economic and social transformation of these countries seemingly has enhanced the authority of existing political systems as it has simultaneously shaken the foundations upon which these systems have been built. While the development boom has resulted in significant accomplishments, there remain major obstacles to diversification and self-sufficiency in the lack of natural resources, the scarcity of manpower, an inadequate infrastructure and an extremely limited absorptive capacity.

Social change has embraced such processes as sedentarization, urbanization, the disruption of traditional lifestyles and kinship patterns, and the de-emphasis of tribal identities. A massive influx of a wide variety of expatriates and cultural influences further complicates the social environment. In the long-run, these changes may help to strengthen national cohesion and the ability of national governments to function effectively; in the short-run, however, the predominant effect may be the emergence of a sense of drift in terms of social goals and values and even alienation, which can only weaken the existing bonds between neotraditional governments and their buffeted citizenry.

Essentially, the prevailing path of political evolution in these countries is along a continuum from tribal, decentralized societies toward neotraditional, centralized monarchies. To date, this process has embraced the development of statehood, the beginning of a sense of national identity, and the emergence of national governments with augmented capabilities and responsibilities. At the same time, however, the forces of change include the steady disintegration of traditional patterns of authority without concomitant viable replacements, the increasingly pertinent question of legitimacy of existing regimes and growing pressures for new kinds of institutionalization and participation.

These political systems are not yet fully centralized, "modernized" monarchies; they are still only partially "de-tribalized" systems. Consequently, dynastic rulers and ruling families remain a dynamic part the on-going process of state-building and thus retain a basic legitimacy. Power is still largely held by a traditional alliance. Ruling families, derived from the prominent clans of important tribes, remain at the apex; other elements include other prominent families, also tribally derived,

and traditional merchant families, which have not only retained position and wealth but have expanded into new areas of influence and opportunity.

Thus, these are not absolute monarchies. Instead, rule is largely a matter of obtaining consensus, whether explicit or implicit. This basic spirit obtains within the ruling family (as demonstrated in the process of succession in all these states, and particularly in Faysal's succession to Sa'ud in Saudi Arabia), and within the traditional alliance mentioned above. Furthermore, political authority must be exercised within limits laid down by Islamic legal and moral precepts and the expectations of the community of Muslims; for example, the stated adherence to the shari'a and perceptions of a just and pious ruler. There exist also established sociopolitical obligations, as defined by Bedouin heritage of social egalitarianism and expressed in such institutions as the majlis.

In various ways, oil wealth has helped to centralize and enhance the power of established leaders. Most obviously, the ruler, acting in behalf of the state, receives oil revenues and is able to utilize them in centralizing state control and, more directly, initiating and guiding "development" efforts. As a result, this allows him to be perceived as directly contributing to the welfare and material prosperity of his subjects. At the same time, however, it should be remembered that the impact of oil wealth is not inherently positive: the resultant process of rapid modernization necessarily causes severe strains and disrupts the existing fabric of society. For example, the mushrooming urbanization of Arabia has produced modern, functional and largely Western cities. But whose cities are they? Housing, transportation patterns, spatial organization and even the preponderant mix of residents are all alien to

indigenous culture. Some part of the total mix of factors contributing to the Iranian revolution undoubtedly lay with that country's inability to cope with the effects of this modernization process. What strain has similar abandonment of a rural culture and economy, sedentarization, urban migration, cultural dilution and social alienation placed on the underlying strength and logic of political entities on the Arab littoral?

The problem is further exacerbated by the fact that these societies and political structures are in the midst of a continually changing, uncertain process of extremely rapid change and thus neither firmly anchored to the safety of tradition nor yet completely "modernized". The institution of the majlis may satisfy the political demands of the recently settled (and thereby unsettled) Bedouin, but what of the new, emerging Gulf national, the "new middle class", the technocrats? In the short-run, their participation in the political system may be secured by the assumption of important positions within the rapidly expanding government and, consequently, significant roles in the decision-making process. The following generation of educated, modernized individuals will not have the same range or depth of opportunities, however, and will likely seek other, more fruitful, means of participation. At some point in the not-so-distant future, will continued tight concentration of political power within the hands of the ruling families and those traditional alliances spark perceptions of a growing social and political stratification? Will these feelings in turn provoke secularized opposition movements, of radical or even liberal roots, to seek basic changes in the system through extraconstitutional means, quite possibly through the medium of military officers as has happened elsewhere in the Middle East? At the same time, however, any changes made by

today's regimes to accommodate shifts in the social and political base of their countries run the risk of arousing the ire of social and religious conservatives, the "fundamentalists," already disturbed by perceptions of a rudderless drift away from the bedrock of traditional Islamic values. The likelihood of an Iranian-style Islamic revolution on the Arab littoral seems rather remote for a number of reasons, including basic differences between Iran and these other countries in the relationship of religious authorities to the state. The possibility remains, however, that at some point Arab leaders will be perceived by their own citizens to have strayed from the Islamic path and thus forfeit a principal basis for their legitimacy.

It should also be kept in mind that the changes sweeping the Gulf have not occurred in a vacuum, but are also influenced directly by outside forces and influences. In part, this reflects the "emergence" of the Gulf in the international arena over the last two or three decades, including its basic political reorientation from British India to the Middle East. The Arab Cold War of the 1950s and 1960s in a sense brought these monarchies into the Middle Eastern political arena by forcing them into a defensive posture vis-à-vis pan-Arab nationalists. The seemingly inevitable tide of revolution, as propounded by Nasir and others, has not swept the Gulf. Instead, the region's rear-guard, defensive attitude has gradually moved to one more of equilibrium, to acceptance within the system. A decisive turning point was the Khartoum conference of 1967, which, among other things, signalled an end to the Saudi/Egyptian (and by extension, conservative/progressive) war-by-proxy in Yemen and the acknowledgement of Gulf states' responsibility for bearing part of the burden of Arab defense against Israel. While in some sense, these

developments indicate movement from instability to stability on one level, the situation is further complicated by the continued problems posed by the Arab-Israeli conflict and the basic dilemma of the Arab oil-producers as demonstrated in the October 1973 war: pressures from other Arabs--in addition to genuine nationalist commitment--dictated the undertaking of an unpalatable oil embargo against countries with whom the Gulf states had long been associated and were still intricately linked.

April 2, 1982

Stability and Instability on the Arab Side of the Gulf

by J. E. Peterson

Discussion by Steven R. Dorr

Nabil Maleh, a Syrian film director, has described the underlying theme of his movie Fragments as portraying the struggle of the people of his region for human dignity. All other political options have been foreclosed with the rise of state repression. Nasirism, socialism, Arab nationalism and anti-colonialism all raised hopes and expectations which have been dashed by the repressive policies of each succeeding government. So says Nabil Maleh. While we focus today on an "Islamic Revolution" and its implications for peace and security in the Gulf region it may be advisable for us to speculate on whether or not the left is really dead in the Middle East. One may wonder if the rhetoric of the Islamic revolution in Iran is tapping some peculiar Islamic religious sentiment or whether the language of religion has taken on the role of the latest political ideology to be utilized to articulate the aspirations of those who have borne the burdens but not shared in the fruits of previous revolutionary efforts. This is a more universal plea. It is the plea of Nabil Maleh for "human dignity." It is the plea, described by Professor Bill, which is being made by Ayatollah Khomeini to the mostaza'fin (oppressed). It is a plea which can be taken out of the Shi'a context of Iran and applied anywhere in the Middle East where conditions warrant. Professor Peterson's description

of the political climate on the Arab side of the Gulf should cause analysts to pause and reflect upon the conditions which lead to revolution.

As a discussant, I should only like to highlight some aspects of the theme in Professor Peterson's paper that social and economic changes in the Arab societies of the Gulf can lead to increased pressure for political participation. It may be impossible to calculate when internal or external pressures may force political change. Nevertheless, some estimation of regime security and stability may be aided by an examination of how one gains access to power and influence in these political systems and how prepared these states are to defend themselves against outside threats. It has been argued by some that the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council was a positive step for stability in the Gulf. The member states have expressed their belief that their "common heritage" and "common destiny" binds them together. However, the things that unite them may only mask the unequal pace of economic development and political change in each of these states which could undermine their unity.

Access to Power

The extent to which those who do not directly hold the reins of power in these societies can gain access to that power, or influence its utilization, varies markedly among the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members.

In the economic sphere, the power which flows from the procedures for the distribution of the wealth of the state, and even the amounts to be dispersed, are quite different.

For example, Saudi Arabia, with a larger population and more wealth to divide, operates a less centralized and thus in some ways a more accessible system, than its small neighbor Qatar, where most of the distribution decisions are made by the ruler.

The extent to which a ruler is answerable to other centers of power in the society (family notables, tribal allies, merchants, religious leaders, military) also varies widely among these states. In the context of the Gulf's conservative political climate, pressures from these groups may alter certain types of behavior or refine policy decisions but radical policy departures or changes in the leadership selection process are unlikely. The majlis system is often viewed as a safety valve mechanism which affords the governed direct access to the rulers. It is also a limited process which may help a father gain a scholarship for his son but may not necessarily help the son obtain a job which has both title and substance. The different paths these states will follow in their search for new political institutions to regulate the political demands and pressures of their people may lead them to different conclusions as to how best assure their survival--their common destiny. With a national assembly in Kuwait, a consultative council in Qatar and a federal assembly in the United Arab Emirates, elites in these states may view their destiny quite differently than their counterparts in Saudi Arabia where none of these institutions exist.

Societal problems also apply similar but unequal pressure on the Gulf states' leaders. The significance of the indigenous Shi'a population in Saudi Arabia which mans the oil field operations and which constitutes over half the population of Bahrain is quite different than in Qatar and the UAE where the Shi'as are mainly an immigrant community. The impact of immigrants also varies between these Gulf states not so much in magnitude, which is enormous in all of these states except Bahrain, but in composition. Saudi Arabia worries about Yemenis while the UAE is inundated with Indians and Kuwait searches for ways to accommodate the influence of Palestinians. Each of these problem areas, and many others described by Dr. Peterson, may be seen as time-bombs ticking away within each society, set to go off at different times. As with most conservative states, decisions to resolve such internal problems may only be taken after the option for delay has been exhausted. The unanswerable question is whether or not that will happen before the time-bombs go off.

Outside Threats

If plans to meet and resolve internal problems in these societies are yet to be formulated either by the individual states or collectively under the GCC, what about outside threats to the Gulf states' "common destiny"? Through the GCC important steps have been taken to shore up individual state's internal security methods and to pool at least some of their resources to provide for the "common defense". But can their

defensive capabilities deal with the threat? Indeed, what is the nature of the threat? The Iranian revolution is now making ominous military advances against Iraq and yet the threat in the Gulf may not be the movement of armies but of ideas. The ideas must be countered by internal policies. If the threat is military, it requires a credible military response. This is something the Arab Gulf states cannot produce alone. Yet, to call in outside assistance, from the U.S. for example, could simply lend credence to the message of the revolution. Bilateral defense pacts, such as those recently concluded between Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and Qatar following the December 1981 attempted coup in Bahrain, may be read in more than one way: As a sign of stronger cooperation between several Gulf states or as an indication of a lack of confidence in the security value of the GCC thus requiring separate measures by individual Council members. In either case, all these cooperative measures are based on the assumption that Saudi Arabia is the key to Gulf security. What then is the key to Saudi security? As Ghazi al-Qusaybi recently noted, "no one can save us from our own people."

THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN SECURITY POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Robert J. Pranger
American Enterprise Institute

(A paper prepared for delivery at the U.S. Department of State,
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THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN SECURITY POLICY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by

Robert J. Pranger*

At the risk of using a cliché, American security policy now stands at a crossroads in the Middle East. After years of relying on the Shah as our main pillar for defensive strength in the Persian Gulf, the United States now faces an uncertain, difficult future in Iran. American relations with Saudi Arabia, while outwardly improved, teeter always on the knife's edge of the Arab-Israeli conflict. To the north, the political situation in Turkey and between Turkey and Greece continues to be precarious, with the 1981 Greek election producing more acrimonious rhetoric than in the recent past. Last, but not least, the peace between Egypt and Israel has brought with it both benefits and costs for American defense policy in the Eastern Mediterranean: while we have gained full access to the Egyptian armed forces and at the same time virtually eliminated the possibility of war between Egypt and Israel, we have incurred the displeasure of radical and moderate Arab nations alike.

In a word, the future is open and very much undetermined as far as American security policy is concerned. What is at stake is a historical U.S. commitment, dating from the Second World War, to a triangular defense strategy--not always conscious--for the Middle East, enclosing at three

*A paper prepared for delivery to the Department of State, 2 April 1982. Dr. Pranger is Director of International Programs at the American Enterprise Institute, Washington, DC. Views are the author's and not necessarily those of the Institute.

points Greece and Turkey, the Persian Gulf, and the Eastern Mediterranean. Such a strategy was obviously developed in concert with Great Britain (and to some extent Soviet Russia) during the war, and then continued after the war during Britain's decline and in reaction to Russia's expansion. We are now at the crossroads of this policy, as far as the United States is concerned. The early 1980s will be critical for American security policy in the Middle East, whether at this point we have fully grasped this fact or not. I would first like to discuss the triangular strategy in its ideal form, and then try to look at its future from the three perspectives of the United States, Soviet Union and countries in the Middle East.

I.

I want to emphasize the ideal nature of the historical American strategy for the Middle East that I am describing. As Graham Allison, Morton Halperin and others have pointed out time and again, American foreign and defense policy decisions are made in highly complicated bureaucratic settings. Under these circumstances neat strategic formulas, even if they existed in the first place, give way to incremental decisionmaking and are often submerged in the frantic pace of crisis management. While Raymond Aron, Henry Kissinger and others have argued that strategy is essential for an adequate defense, the fact remains that such strategy often comes after events have occurred and not before, thereby becoming something more like a rationalization (or justification) than a plan. My own experience with policy planning in the Department of Defense has taught me how difficult it is to develop strategic plans that actually direct policy instead of reflecting policy. In other words, philosophy gives way to ordinary politics, and the manipulation of ideas retreats before the management of group (and personal) conflict.

American security policy in the Middle East has grown out of three separate episodes in the Second World War -- Turkish neutrality and Nazi occupation of Greece, the North African campaign, and the Middle East Supply Center in the Persian Gulf. After the war ended, however, a more careful American formulation of a triangular strategy involving Greece and Turkey, the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean took shape, due partly to Soviet expansion and partly to Israel's emergence as an independent nation. It should be added that the northern and Persian Gulf points of the triangle

were more explicitly anti-Soviet, while the Eastern Mediterranean sector had a mixed rationale. The Persian Gulf has traditionally been a center of economic linkages (oil) to the United States as well as a zone of containment against Soviet advances.

The Greek and Turkish part of the strategy was most explicitly aimed at containing the Soviet Union and, in turn, was integrated into a wider American Cold War policy. In his 12 March 1947 message to Congress recommending aid to Greece and Turkey, President Truman stated that one of the primary objectives of American foreign policy was "the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion." Totalitarian regimes imposed by "direct and indirect aggression" undermine international peace and thus the security of the United States. The President saw two alternative political systems between which "every nation must choose" -- although the choice was "too often not a free one." One system was "based upon the will of the majority . . . [and] distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression." Under the other, government reflected "the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority, relying upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedom." In conclusion, the President put into one sentence the essence of what came to be called the Truman Doctrine: "I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

This approach would most clearly apply to only four countries in the Near and Middle East, Greece, Israel, Lebanon and Turkey. By 1958 the

policy was extended to Lebanon under the Eisenhower Doctrine and somewhat more curiously applied to other countries, such as Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, which hardly fit the image of thriving democracies. Similarly, Israel was, by definition, protected under the same terms, although this has never been made in quite the dramatic form guaranteed other countries in the Middle East strategic triangle in 1947 and 1958. During the height of the Cold War our ambitions to find allies in the cause of containing Communism knew scarcely any bounds in the Middle East; at various times we tried to move both Jordan and Egypt into alliances with the Baghdad Pact as well as attempting to build networks of military relations all the way from the western reaches of North Africa to the Indian subcontinent (we may now be condemned to repeat these past mistakes). This effort at containment, despite its strategic rationale, grew out of practical imperatives regarding Soviet policy, as perceived by President Truman in 1947 and perhaps even earlier in northern Iran in 1946. In a sense, the Middle East part of our containment strategy, therefore, came from the crises in the northern point of the triangle described earlier, with this point providing the most consistent long-term planning rationale for American defense policy in the Middle East. By 1952 Greece and Turkey were also linked to NATO, thereby formally connecting our Middle East strategy to broader global policies.

In the Persian Gulf and Eastern Mediterranean, defense against the Soviet Union was mixed with other strategic imperatives which at times could actually work against containment. For example, both the Russians and ourselves have found it mandatory to befriend the Arab world. While we have consistently supported Israel militarily against Arab attack, we have never engaged in military hostilities against an Arab power, save Libya in 1981, even when this

power was supported by the Soviet Union. In one case, Iraq, we sided for a while with Kurdish insurgents against an Arab country, but in general we have even refrained from internal operations against Arab nations friendly to the U.S.S.R. One reason for this contradiction in American policy is obvious: containment and oil do not always mix. Containment and oil have been most perfectly blended in Iran and Saudi Arabia, until very recently at least. With the Iranian revolution of 1978-1979 and the Israel-Egypt treaty of 1979 our strategic triangle linking Greece and Turkey, the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean has broken apart with little immediate prospect for its reconstruction. Khomeini's Iran is tempted to see the Soviet Union as more benign than the United States, and Saudi Arabia has more than once in the past few years balked at full-fledged military cooperation with American forces.

The Eastern Mediterranean has been the most clear example of contradictory American policies, stretched as we have been between our steadfast allegiance to Israel and our long-standing friendship for the Arab world. Until the Sadat initiative of 1977 with its aftermath at Camp David and the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, there was never a likelihood that a strong containment policy against the Soviet Union could be built in the Eastern Mediterranean. Now, as trouble continues between Greece and Turkey and turmoil threatens the Persian Gulf, an ironic twist in history has appeared: there is a growing possibility that America's strongest, rather than weakest defense linkages in the Middle East will be in the Eastern Mediterranean point of the old strategic triangle. Yet, this may well signify a change of American security policy in the Middle East for the future, so important as to not only nullify our deterrence of the U.S.S.R. but also imperil our access to the Persian Gulf. I would now like to discuss this possible change from three perspectives—the Soviet, the American and the Middle Eastern.

II.

The American strategic triangle in the Middle East proved to be a most formidable defense of U.S. interests in the thirty years after the Truman Doctrine was first announced. What this strategy insured was virtual U.S. control of the Mediterranean basin, all its access points, and most of the littoral states. In addition, the Persian Gulf and Red Sea and approaches through the Indian Ocean were within the American sphere of influence. True, the Soviet Union attempted in various ways to outmaneuver this strategy in order to continue its own southward ambitions or simply to neutralize our encirclement, but with limited success. To this day, American policy has formidable advantages, based on over three decades of experience.

Now this strategy is threatened by a major disruption of its design in the Persian Gulf. More than any other event since 1947, the Iranian revolution requires a rethinking of American defense policy in the Middle East. Threatening to break loose from the post-war strategic triangle is the Persian Gulf. The danger is compounded by ambivalent relations between the United States and Saudi Arabia exacerbated by the American interest in Israel as a strategic partner. I will return to possible American options for the future, given this turn of events, but I would first like to look at possible Soviet responses to this historical turning point for American policy.

First, it is evident in all Soviet commentary on the Iranian revolution that Moscow sees the situation in Iran as having dealt a great blow to America's postwar strategy in the Middle East. They need only have read U.S. policy pronouncements about the importance of the Shah's Iran to our interests in the Persian Gulf and beyond.

Second, it is also clear that the Soviet Union expects the United States to try in various ways to compensate for Iran's loss by new strategic moves. Much attention in Soviet political analysis has been devoted to the treaty between Egypt and Israel as the start of American planning that will also create a new defense alliance between Cairo and Jerusalem, possibly attempting to bring Jordan and Saudi Arabia into the arrangement as well. Allegations have also been made by the Russians that the United States is busy intimidating the new Iranian regime and meddling in various parts of the Middle East such as Yemen/ (in Brezezinski's "arc of instability") All this is seen as a combination of American panic and maneuver.

Third, the Soviet Union is not apparently seeking, at this point, to rush vigorously into a possible power vacuum in the Persian Gulf, content instead to play a waiting game in Iran, Pakistan and possibly Saudi Arabia from its military positions in Afghanistan. This game will involve, however, various inducements to keep Iran from rejoining a close American relationship—from active expressions of sympathy for the Khomeini regime to warnings that the 1921 treaty of friendship between Iran and Russia, with its clause permitting Soviet intervention in case of threats to the security of the U.S.S.R., is still very relevant to the course of future events. One can expect more sentiments of good will offered Saudi Arabia by Moscow as in the recent past. All this waiting and watching by the Soviet Union will be based on a valid premise that events are still unfolding in the Persian Gulf and in a direction that may possibly run counter to American interests.

Fourth, the most vigorous aspect of Soviet efforts in the Middle East will be not in the Persian Gulf but in relation to the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. By working strenuously to fan Arab discontent with the

treaty, already abundantly present without Russian interference, it may be hoped that this effort will have an indirect effect on the Persian Gulf situation as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean. Possible Saudi defection from the United States, very much connected with the 1979 treaty and the potential for Soviet intervention in this affair (perhaps through other Arab states with influence on Saudi Arabia), is always a possibility. The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), symbol of Arab resistance to American imperialism in the Middle East, has been accorded full diplomatic status by the U.S.S.R. Further, Moscow continues to court key leaders in the Camp David rejectionist front--Assad, Hussein and Qaddafi. Perhaps partly out of anxiety that it has become captive to the rejectionists and their Soviet patrons, Saudi Arabia has produced its own peace plan for settling the Palestine question, the Fahd Plan, but the Fez summit debacle in late 1981 demonstrates how cramped is Saudi Arabia's room for maneuver among the other Arab states. Now President Mubarak of Egypt seems interested in allying himself with those who will forgive Egypt for reclaiming the Sinai under Camp David, but who refuse to allow Egyptian surrender of the West Bank to Israel's autonomy plan.

III.

How might American policy respond to the Iranian revolution's destructive impact on thirty years of U.S. defense policy in the Middle East? There are four basic options, the first of which seems almost utopian while the other three offer less U.S. strength against the Soviet Union than before Iran's revolution. I see no American defense policy for the future that will replace the comprehensive power of the past strategy, but perhaps the Soviet Union is constrained more as well by changes which have occurred not in the Persian Gulf but in the Eastern Mediterranean. What I will suggest at the end of this discussion of American options is that the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel should not be seen primarily as the basis for a new defense alliance, but as an opportunity for reducing conflict in the Middle East to the point where the Soviet Union loses the access it has in the region because of the Arab-Israeli struggle. Egypt's defection from Arab negativity against Israel already removes the most powerful Arab nation from this struggle and thereby reduces measurably the possibility for another full-scale war. Now to the four American options for a future defense policy in the Middle East after the Iranian revolution.

The first and most utopian American option would be to continue policies as if the strategic triangle had not been disrupted by events in the Persian Gulf. No public evidence suggests that Iran will ever return to its former pro-American enthusiasm. Iran's military has now learned to live without U.S. support, so no one can predict what course Iranian defense policy will take. It may also be that even if the Shah's

supporters or other opponents of the fundamentalist regime were to return to power, close relations with the U.S. defense establishment would not be resurrected.

A second option for the United States is to continue the strategic triangle policy, but shift emphasis in the Persian Gulf from Iran to Saudi Arabia. This appeared to be the favored plan of the Carter administration until the treaty between Egypt and Israel brought Saudi wrath down upon Sadat. Secretary Weinberger has searched for similar opportunities in 1982. Even before the treaty, however, there were signs of Saudi disenchantment with American policies in the Gulf directly related to events in Iran. While this option should still be explored, it should not be pushed too hard. Perhaps Saudi anxiety about high American military profiles in the Gulf will abate. In any event, it is likely that even with Saudi Arabia playing a more active role in American security arrangements in the Middle East, Iran will probably not be a partner in any meaningful sense. This will make the Persian Gulf point in the strategic triangle less powerful than before. Should the Saudi monarchy collapse, the Persian Gulf dimension of American strategy might completely fall apart. The question now is not so much encouraging Saudi Arabia to play a large role, but preventing its further defection from U.S. defense policy. Constant enlargement of Rapid Deployment Force capabilities however, may reach a point at which the Saudis will actually feel more threatened by this force than by the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Option three would involve an agreement between the United States and Soviet Union to substantially downplay the ambitions of the two superpowers in the Gulf by some form of strategic disengagement negotiated between them. Such an agreement would include mutual restraint in supplying arms, deploying naval forces in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean, and so forth. This option would definitely require that the United States, not the Soviet Union,

change significantly its postwar Middle East strategy, with major emphasis on turning to a north-south axis running from the Turkish straits to the Suez Canal in other words, the triangular conception would be replaced by a defense plan of much less scope and strength. If the U.S.S.R. would also withdraw, some would argue this option has merits. Besides, the postwar triangular strategy, as we have seen, is largely obsolete anyway. I think, however, that the symbolic concessions would be largely American and this would reflect most negatively on American security policy. Option three might prove more attractive, however, if the Soviet Union would reciprocate by supporting American peace initiatives along the lines already negotiated between Egypt and Israel.

A fourth and final American security option in the Middle East would be to eventually build a defense alliance between Israel and various Arab states who might make peace with Israel, beginning with Egypt. For example, by shifting military support out of the Persian Gulf into Egypt, the United States would simply be exchanging Arab allies and at the same time gaining new strategic advantage in the Eastern Mediterranean. An Egyptian-Israeli military alliance, however, is no more a substitute for American decline in power in the Persian Gulf than is the neutralization concept in option three. Without some kind of linkage to a continued American presence in the Gulf, a defense relationship between Cairo and Jerusalem would not provide the United States with a comprehensive Middle East national security policy.

It is obvious, therefore, that only some combination of option two, 27 expanded Saudi defense relationship with the United States, and option four, closer Egyptian-Israeli defense ties (with Jordan joining at some

later date), would constitute any kind of substitute for the strategic triangle of the past 30 years. Yet, such an enlarged role for the Saudis and a more intimate military relationships between Egypt and Israel (and possibly Jordan) are both premature ideas at this time. American security policy for the future is left with some reconstruction to do, but with no clear idea of what will be accomplished in this effort. Most likely the result will not be a strategy in the Middle East as comprehensive as in the past. Meanwhile, there could be a long period of drift in American defense policy where the Soviet Union could move to its advantage in various ways. This places a great premium on responses of Middle Eastern states to this turn of events in American policy, a matter I will shortly discuss as a conclusion to my analysis.

The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel provides less a basis for a new defense alignment than an opportunity for controlling violence in the Middle East by reducing its probability. By removing the most prominent military actor in the Arab world, Egypt, as a threat to Israel's security, the treaty has reduced the likelihood that full-scale warfare will occur again in the Middle East. If the Soviet Union has tended to gain influence because of the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially in its support of Arab preparations for war, then the extent to which Arab states can no longer seriously consider the war option will also mark a lessening of Soviet power. I think this logic has some merit, but it can be carried too far. For example, the Russian role in the Persian Gulf during Iran's revolution has been to capitalize on our mistakes -- in support of the Shah and then in the confusion of his downfall -- and not to directly support the revolution itself.

In conclusion, the American strategic triangle of the past 30 years in the Middle East has been seriously weakened by Iran's revolution and the accidental signing of the Egyptian-Israeli treaty at the very time that we needed further Saudi support in the Persian Gulf. Even with additional Saudi participation, however, there can be no substitute for the Shah's close ties with our foreign and defense policy. The past is prologue to the future, some say, but in the case of American defense policy in the Middle East, the past is now behind us and provides little guidance for the future. Under these circumstances I believe it is finally time for various states in the Middle East to consider security options which, while still dependent to some extent on the United States for material support, also recognize that the near-hegemonic position of the United States in the region for 30 years is now past. I will conclude my analysis by considering some possible responses by states in the Middle East to the present fluid state of American security policy in the region.

IV.

By arguing that American security policy in the Middle East will never be as comprehensively powerful after Iran's revolution as before, I do not mean to suggest that the United States is powerless in the region. Our resources for action in defense of vital interests are still quite impressive. The strategic triangle was linked in the north to NATO, in the Eastern Mediterranean to the force of the Sixth Fleet as well as our European and Continental commands, and in the Persian Gulf to a growing American presence in the Indian Ocean by way of our Pacific command. In other words, the Middle East strategy maintained by the United States for 30 years was sustained by our full global military power, nuclear and conventional. The problem is that our power to support a defense strategy in the Middle East has remained more stable, despite some pessimistic forecasts, than our strategy itself. We now have power in the Middle East without a well-organized strategy.

A reasonable response for nations in the Middle East who have traditionally been dependent on American defense support would be to remain confident that the support will continue to be there. This will avert panic if nothing else. Our problem in Iran was not that we were powerless, but that a special kind of revolution in that nation's politics prevented us from converting our potential power into real influence. When we had influence during the Shah's regime, we did not use much foresight in posturing ourselves in Iran in such a way as to avoid the kind of situation where we were relatively impotent to protect our own strategic interests in the Persian Gulf. Short of such a dramatic change of regimes, however, it is safe to assume that the United States can protect its commitments in the Middle East through a combination of capabilities within its worldwide

military force structure (the Rapid Deployment Force ostensibly ties these capabilities together). Diplomacy also remains a strong American asset.

In other words, the United States may presently be without a security strategy in the Middle East comparable to that of the past, but it retains substantial defense capability for the Middle East in the absence of this strategy. It is not necessarily true, therefore, that a defense is only as sound as its strategy. In the absence of an overall strategic design the United States will simply be forced to more selective engagements with no overall plan or rationale. We have been operating on this basis since Vietnam anyway, though at least in the Middle East the fiction of a comprehensive strategy remained until the Shah's overthrow.

Panicky or "go-it-alone" responses by countries in the Middle East to American strategic set-backs in the region would be ill-advised. I would not want my analysis of this strategic muddle to be interpreted as an argument that our power has slipped accordingly. The United States is still well-armed for Middle East contingencies and fully able to protect its commitments in a state of strategic fluidity. We may hesitate to exercise force at times, however, precisely because we no longer have a consistent strategy that demands action. This is not an ideal situation, but more satisfactory than having no strategy and no force. In this era of growing complexity in international politics we may have to live with more open or "indeterminate" strategies anyway. Persistent disequilibrium in the Persian Gulf, however, continues to make strategic planning more rather than less difficult for the United States, and thus threatens still more confusion for American defense policy. Central to this instability will be the future of Iran's revolution.

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